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REFORM OF THE DRINK TRAFFIC.

BY THE REV. W. S. RAINSFORD, D. D.

THE criticisms and suggestions on my article in the May number of *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*, though very numerous, may, I think, without any discourtesy to the writers, be classified under a few heads.

“Let there be a holy church in every village, but also an equally holy tavern with a devout man as tapster, serving in the fear of God,” says one, quoting Ruskin. And at the other extreme is the well-meaning and zealous reformer, who assures us that “every clergyman who uses liquor of any sort as a beverage destroys his usefulness in saving his fellows.”

Some of the suggestions made are of weight. I shall try to go over the ground they cover as briefly as I can, begging the readers of *THE REVIEW*, as I do, so again to remember that I am very far from claiming anything like a comprehensive knowledge of this most difficult of modern questions ; and that I do not even propose any plan or method of Temperance Reform which professes to serve as a panacea for so deep rooted an ill.

The fundamental mistake of nearly all reformers seems to me to be an unwise haste. Quick methods are apt to be superficial ; they may cut off the nettle at the head, while they leave the root still vigorous and untouched.

Several of my correspondents urge the universal acceptance of one or other of certain semi-scientific cures, and cannot see any reason why the clergy or temperance reformers should not publicly advocate the application of such methods to those suffering from alcoholism. Such action, however, would be quite unwarranted. The scientist must apply his rigid tests, the practitioner pursue his experiments ; and when the results and conclusions arrived at by both are placed before us, it will be time enough for public teachers to urge on the public the use of such aids as have been proved to be reliable and safe. Science may yet discover for us some means by which the tendencies of hereditary

alcoholism may be counteracted, means by which the man who wishes to break the yoke from his neck may win new strength and take a new start. But there does not seem to be evidence that any method of treatment yet resorted to always does good, while it has been proved that in many cases some of the "cures" are highly dangerous, and the temperance reformer will do well to let such things alone till their full value be proven.

I find it difficult to condense a very able letter written by a gentleman in the West, which sums up with great force almost all the objections that I have heard urged against saloon reform.

"How do you propose to overcome," says my correspondent, "the opposition of saloon-keepers? You suggest no means of limiting their activity as individuals and in union, and they would no doubt continue as powerful as ever and more hostile than ever. You mention no way in which the opposition of political ward heelers may be weakened; nor do you set forth strong reasons for hoping that the Prohibitionists will abandon their cardinal principle, because you make the sale of liquor subordinate to that of food. The success of your plan would pain them more deeply, as being a half measure, than would a great increase in the business of the saloon proper. The many good preachers will continue to rebuke those who taste liquor, and many doubtless would be ready to discipline church members who should frequent such places of resort as you suggest. In short, as your plan becomes more successful and more wide-spread the opposition from the three forces you mentioned would grow hotter." To this I answer that nothing can be done with the Prohibition Party. They are wrong in principle and therefore mistaken in practice. Many good preachers, no doubt, will continue to rebuke those who taste liquor; but as education grows, their number will decrease.

Again, my correspondent says: "Supposing your plan to be comprehensive enough, it must still fail of general application for want of people to carry it on. The retail liquor trade is so uninviting a business to most of those who wish well to temperance, that they can be relied upon to leave it alone. Even if a man is willing to devote himself to conducting a liquor establishment, he could not be successful without a remarkable combination of personal characteristics and outward circumstances. He must have an income more than sufficient to support himself and his

family. He must be the sort of man who attracts people." Here again, perhaps owing to my want of clearness in statement, my correspondent has entirely misunderstood what has been proposed. The sort of saloons that I have suggested ought to pay well ; and it should not be difficult therefore to secure respectable men, experienced in the retail liquor business, to conduct them ; care, of course, being taken to see that the laws laid down for their management were scrupulously obeyed. Such men there are in plenty. To start and equip such establishments men would have to be found who were willing to take some risk for the sake of trying an experiment. But once let it be proven that there was money in it, I cannot think that it would be hard to secure investors ; and, indeed, the history of temperance reform in Norway and Sweden abundantly supports this opinion.

Still, again, my correspondent objects : "The great purpose in keeping such saloons would be to draw people, more especially the lower grades of people, away from the old saloons into these better places. How is this to be done ? Those more objectionable forms of entertainment which cannot be introduced into the reformed saloons are the very ones which attract the customers whom it is most important to reach, and you cannot suggest any compensating attraction for your houses, a food counter or anything else, which saloon-keepers cannot and will not obtain for theirs. They can afford to spend money, and they know how to do it effectively. If competition ever arose, the saloons would cut prices and offer attractions beyond anything which reformed houses could do ; and would no doubt use the boycott as a means of strengthening their position. When it comes to a struggle for the patronage of the lower classes of workingmen, you could not hope to stand one day against the resources of the saloon-keepers." That objection is well stated ; but it applies with greatly diminished force to large cities, of which it should be remembered I am specially speaking. No boycott would be effectual in a large city. Nor can it be doubted that great good would be achieved by forcing the saloons, through competition, to better their methods, even if only to the extent of opening up food counters, varying their class of drinks, and making similar changes. By so much would the public gain.

Indeed, I have received what seems a remarkable suggestion from a saloon-keeper, who assures me that he has done all in his

power to have our licensing law so altered, that where the licensee keeps tables and food, reducing his bar-room and developing his restaurant, the price of his license should be reduced. This retail liquor dealer is altogether in favor of providing saloons, where the customers shall have every opportunity of sitting down at tables, and having their drinks brought to them there; where they shall have every facility of procuring hot food at all times, when the place is open. He is quite confident that such a business enterprise would pay well. And let me say here, that this is no solitary case. I have met many saloon-keepers who, beyond question, were anxious to improve in all ways within their power the business in which they are engaged. It is to such men we need to look for practical suggestion and aid, in shaping any measures of reform; and to ignore them all, to suppose that all of them are men of poor character and unworthy ambition, argues as much ignorance as it does lack of charity.

There are exaggerated ideas abroad as to the opposition that may be expected from the retail liquor dealers to any movement that has for its object the reform of their business. I do not think that they are any worse than those they serve—and among these are the great majority of our respectable working men and women, whose morals are quite up to the average—who, indeed, in my judgment are the most moral element in our city communities.

Temperance reformers as a rule know little of saloons or saloon-keepers, and draw pictures of them which are apt to be somewhat imaginative. The ordinary retailer detests seeing a drunken man on his premises. He thinks a man is a fool to get drunk, and a nuisance when he is drunk—because he is an injury to his business.

This view of the liquor dealer may seem rose colored. Let me quote from one whose name carries as much weight on such a question as the name of any man living—Charles Booth, author of *Life and Labor of the People in London*.

“A most horrible and true picture may be drawn of the trade in drink, of the wickedness and misery that goes with it. So horrible that one cannot wonder that some eyes are blinded to all else, and there is a cry of ‘Away with this accursed abomination.’ There is, however, much more to be said. Anyone who frequents public houses knows that actual drunkenness is very much the exception. At the worst houses in the worst neighborhoods many, or perhaps most, of those who stand at the bars, whether

men or women, are stamped with the effects of drink, and, if orderly at the moment, are perhaps at other times mad or incapable under its influence ; but at the hundreds of respectable public houses scattered plentifully all through the district this is not the case. It could not be. They live by supplying the wants of the bulk of the people, and it is not possible that they should be much worse than the people they serve. Go into any of these houses—the ordinary public house at the corner of any ordinary East End street—there, standing at the counter, or seated on the benches against wall or partition, will be perhaps half a dozen people, men and women, chatting together over their beer—more often beer than spirits ; or you may see a few men come in, with no time to lose, briskly drink their glass and go. Behind the bar will be a decent, middle-aged woman, something above her customers in class, very neatly dressed, respecting herself and respected by them. The whole scene comfortable, quiet, and orderly. To these houses those who live near send their children with a jug as readily as they would send them to any other shop. I do not want to press this more cheerful point of view further than is necessary to relieve the darker shades of the picture. I would rather admit the evils and try to show how they may be lessened, and what the tendencies are that make for improvement. It is evident that publicans, like all the rest of us, are feeling the stress of competition. Walk through the streets, and everywhere it may be seen that the public houses are put to it to please their customers. Placards announcing change of management frequently meet the eye, while almost every house vigorously announces its reduced prices. ‘So much the worse,’ some will say. But no ! It is a good thing that they should be considering how to make themselves more attractive. Undermined by the increasing temperance of the people, and subject to direct attack from the cocoa-rooms on the one side and the clubs on the other, the licensed victuallers begin to see that they cannot live by drink alone. Look more closely at the signs in their windows. There is hardly a window that does not show the necessity felt to cater for other wants besides drink. . . . In such a situation it would be a fatal mistake to decrease the number of the houses in the cause of temperance. To encourage the decent and respectable publican by making existence difficult to the disreputable is the better policy, but let us on no account interfere with a natural development, which, if I am right, is making it every day more difficult to make a livelihood by the simple sale of drink.”

The objection that there can be no attraction offered in the reformed saloon, which would not be duplicated and improved on in the ordinary saloon, would be a final and unanswerable objection, if it were sought to abolish saloons and stamp out the drink traffic ; but this, as I have said, I believe to be neither possible nor desirable in New York any more than it is in London. What I do think can be done is to raise the tone of the saloon by making it less of a bar and more of a restaurant ; by throwing it open to the public and removing its blinds, and by improving the quality of its liquor.

One more suggestion has been made. It is that the coöpera-

tive method should be introduced, and the lodgers in several adjoining tenements should support a private saloon, live more at home, spend less, and divide among themselves what are now the profits of the middleman. There is scarcely any department of their lives in which our poor would not be greatly benefited by coöperation; but, unfortunately, they are not sufficiently educated to understand its advantages or to practise them. And indeed, the constant change of habitation which tenement-house life involves would alone, I fear, be at present an insuperable objection to any application of this method to the saloon.

And now let me, if I may, a little more fully state some points of importance. The question before us is largely how to deal with the intemperance of the immigrant peoples. How shall we provide for the needs of those who have come to us from foreign lands, with habits formed in those lands, or for the needs of the children of those who are of foreign birth? There seems to be little doubt that the native American is fast becoming sober. Two generations ago he drank considerably; one generation ago he drank less; and now he is rarely a drunkard. Our difficulty lies in dealing with the various kinships that come from across the sea. If habits of intemperance are ingrained in them there, they find themselves with unusual opportunities of indulging them here.

There surely is one possible cure; and that is, education. This should begin with the children in the public schools; and to do this, we must know more than we know at present about the effects of alcohol. The most contradictory statements have been made on this subject, guaranteed by names of weight; and the ordinary man finds it almost impossible to come to a definite conclusion. On one side, he hears alcohol is poison, pure and simple; on the other, that it is a food. The physiologist takes him into his laboratory and proves to him that alcohol retards the process of digestion, and so is poison. The pathologist, equally certain of his results, proves that when alcohol is taken into the stomach it is so quickly absorbed that it passes out of that member and so is not present to retard digestion; but, on the other hand, helps to increase the secretion of digestive juices. Here, at first sight, seems flat contradiction, but the divergency of opinion is of course to be explained by the different points of view of the pathologist and physiologist.

It ought not to be difficult to-day for doctors and scientific men to agree on simple statements which could find their place in textbooks, and so spread knowledge among the million; but this, as yet, has not been done. And even if it were done, the prejudice of the temperance folk is so strong and so persistently operative that it is very doubtful whether such textbooks could be placed in the schools. A noted temperance organization demanded of one city board of education and a State board that the children under those boards should be taught for two hours weekly the physiological effects of alcohol, while, as a matter of fact, the child could be taught all that is known of its physiological effects in half an hour. The granting of this demand would have simply transformed the teachers into temperance lecturers, and the schools into channels for the dissemination of theories on this subject, which would prove to be misleading, if not absolutely false.

It is very easy to make alcohol a sort of scapegoat on which to pile the sins of the people. The criminal himself, glad of an excuse, attributes his trouble to liquor. But he is scarcely a good judge in his own case. I learn from the best authority that, while the youthful wardens of our prisons generally state in their reports that alcohol is, in a very large proportion of the cases under their charge, a cause of crime, the wardens who have had longer experience attribute to alcoholism a smaller percentage of crime.

I know full well that in such brief space as a magazine article allows me it is impossible to avoid being misunderstood when one deals with such a question as this. It seems to a multitude of good people who judge hastily that nothing but harm can come from any movement or teaching which appears to make light of the awful blight of drunkenness. I must at present, I fear, rest under the censure of such. But what I plead for is a more radical dealing with the evil. As long as conditions of life provoke to drink men will destroy themselves with drinking. As long as they breathe foul air at night, in sleeping quarters all too narrow, they will wake up in the morning with a craving for liquor. As long as they are denied all rational amusement they will go in for "soak" and "debauch." You cannot better the condition of those who are being ruined by the present retail liquor business by attacking only that business which seems the immediate cause of

their ruin. We must do more than this. We must, if we love our fellow men, go down to the root of the matter and seek to alter that.

The one necessary thing to our city workingman is a place where he can spend his afternoon and evening. He has no home, only part of a room at best ; perhaps a bed to himself, and this is doubtful. The place where he sleeps is cold in the winter evenings and intolerably hot in the summer. He is actually driven to the saloon ; there is no other place for him. To expect him to sit in his single room and look at his bare wall is ridiculous. He might almost as well be in Sing Sing. Nor will your average workingman rush to take advantage of your reading-room, coffee-house, etc., as soon as you throw open its doors to him. He has prejudices. He is afraid of being assailed by those who look down on him, or with whose opinions he does not agree, and he has a righteous objection to being patronized. This is exactly the condition of scores of thousands of unmarried men (I have not time at present to deal with the question as it applies to the married man, whose case is scarcely better) in our large cities. And these are they who are the main support of the present saloon. In the saloon he meets his friends and spends most of his leisure time. With the saloon-keeper he is on friendly terms. Improve his place of resort, and you do much to improve him. It is improving. The reforms most needed are those that will hasten its improvement.

The Gothenberg System came into existence in 1836. For the first sixty years of this century Scandinavia was noted for its drunkenness. In Norway and Sweden there was uncontrolled distillation of brandy, which was and is the popular drink. Every corn grower was practically his own distiller. In 1830 there were no fewer than 170,000 stills at work in Sweden. In 1850 they were reduced to 40,000, and in 1855 a very important law was passed in Sweden, which gave local option to the people. It allowed them to reduce the number of public houses to zero ; or it allowed them to continue the existing system of private licenses ; or it provided for the establishment of companies to take up those licenses. This legislation applied only to public houses where native brandy was sold. It did not touch beer, which is regarded as a temperance drink.

In 1866, the town of Gothenberg adopted the system now

called by its name. It was that of a limited liability company, pledged to work for the benefit of the public, controlled by the public, and devoting all its surplus profits to the public welfare, after payment of a moderate interest of five per cent. upon the capital of the society. The Municipal Council fixes the number of licenses required to meet the convenience of the public, and grants a monopoly of these to a society formed for the purpose of undertaking the trade, generally for a term of five years at a time. The operations of the society are subject to the control, and its books open to the inspection, of the Council. The statutes, by-laws and regulations, as well as all the appointments in the society's service, must be approved by the Council. The committee of management of the society is formed of a body of representative men, of whom a certain proportion are elected by the shareholders, while the remainder are appointed by the Municipal Council, and may or may not be shareholders; or may or may not be Municipal Councillors. This system has now been applied to the municipalities in Norway so generally that there are only three small villages, numbering in all a little over 1,200 people, who have not adopted it.

There is one important distinction, however, in the working of the law in the two countries. The surplus over and above five per cent. paid to the shareholders goes, under the Gothenberg System, to the local municipal treasury; while under the Norwegian System, it is used in works of charity and public utility, such as parks, etc. There seems considerable danger attaching to any system which hands over large sums of money to a local municipal treasury; as local authorities have then as good reason as private persons for pushing the sale of liquor.

In 1876 there were twenty-two societies formed under this law in operation in Norway; and the total consumption of ardent spirits in that country was 12,300,000 litres. In 1889 there were fifty-one societies, and the total consumption had fallen to 5,600,000. A practical application of this system is now proposed for Massachusetts, the features of which are embodied in the following bill recently submitted to the legislature by Mr. C. F. Dole, and entitled "An Act as to the Norwegian System of Dispensing Intoxicating Liquors:"

SECTION 1. The voters of each town at its annual meeting, and of each ward in any city at its annual municipal election, shall have an opportunity

to vote "yes" or "no" upon the question whether the Norwegian System, as hereinafter stated, of dispensing intoxicating liquors, shall be adopted in said town or ward, and if a majority of the voters shall vote in the affirmative, then the licensing power therein shall grant a license of the first five classes in section ten of chapter one hundred of the Public Statutes, without charge, to a corporation to be formed by ten or more citizens thereof, whose officers shall consist of president, secretary and a board of directors of not less than five nor more than ten persons, and otherwise formed according to general laws, and such corporation shall establish a place or places for dispensing said liquors not exceeding the number now provided by law for license, and no license of any of said five classes shall be granted to any other party in said town or ward of a city, except hotels and clubs. There shall be only one such corporation in said ward or town, and no such corporation shall be formed without the approval of a justice of the superior court, after suitable notice to the public; and if more than one such corporation is desired, said justice shall determine which one shall exist and take such license. No liquors shall be sold to any man intoxicated, or to a minor under sixteen years of age, or on credit, and no such minor shall be allowed on the premises, and no adulterated liquors shall be sold. Such corporation shall have such by-laws not inconsistent herewith as the stockholders may make; and no such corporation shall be allowed to take a license or dispense any of said liquors until its organization and by-laws shall have been approved by a justice of the superior court. The capital necessary to carry on a business of dispensing said liquors by the corporation shall be paid in by those who subscribe for the stock, and no stockholder shall receive more than a dividend of five per cent. per annum, payable semi-annually on his stock: and after all the expenses of the business and the dividend has been paid, the balance of net profit shall be distributed at a fixed time in each year for such charitable and industrial purposes in said ward or town as the stockholders and the board of directors, separately, may approve: *provided, however*, that no such distribution shall be made without the approval of one of said justices, and such justice shall determine how and to whom the same shall be given, and his decision shall be final.

SEC. 2. The provisions of law as to voting upon license questions shall apply to said question relating to the Norwegian system.

SEC. 3. This act shall take effect upon its passage.

The liquor question is far from settled—the lines along which we are to seek its solution are not even laid down as yet. On all hands men recognize its importance and recognize also the futility of those means that so far have been employed for grappling with it. For myself, I cannot feel any great enthusiasm for immediate legislation. Whether it take the shape suggested in Mr. C. F. Dole's Massachusetts Bill, or attempt a State monopoly, as under the lead of Governor Tillman the South Carolinians seem bent on doing, we can gain little permanent good by enacting laws so long as we know so little and are so divided in opinion. Laws that are the result of moral panic or that do not represent

the mature convictions of the bulk of the people simply serve as an excuse for personal effort in the direction of reform, and soon fail of their purpose. For many a day to come we must depend chiefly on personal effort. Earnest men who will not readily be discouraged and who command universal respect, men of moderation and of means, are wanted. They can establish decent restaurant-saloons, where music is provided ; decent places where people will be ashamed to get drunk ; where all things make for moderation, not excess ; where the laws could be obeyed absolutely, no blackmail paid to any one, and all business done on a cash basis.

These, when wisely placed, would pay a reasonable interest on money invested in them—and they would be a perpetual object-lesson of great value. They would draw the attention of the capitalist as a safe investment ; and soon, when his prejudices were overcome, the sober and temperate portion of the working population would discover in them the very thing it needs so sorely—an innocent place of rest and recuperation, where families as well as individuals may escape from the narrowness of home.

W. S. RAINSFORD.